

Approved For Release 2000/04/13 : CIA-RDP70-

JOHN BIRCH UNIT STUDY SUGGESTED

Senators Eye Semi-Secret, Superconservative Society

By ERNEST B. FURGURSON
(Washington Bureau of The Sun)

Washington, March 30 — Individual senators of both parties today suggested a congressional investigation of the semi-secret, superconservative John Birch Society.

In the House, a Wisconsin Democrat disclosed that the chairman of the Un-American Activities Committee had turned down his request for such a study.

And a California Republican said he himself was a member of the society, claiming "The big 88 per cent of its program is intense patriotism and anti-communism."

Right-Wing Movement

The John Birch Society is a distant right-wing movement claiming "cells" in many states.

Its leader has pinned "Communist," "pro-Communist" or "traitor" labels on such Americans as former Presidents Eisenhower, Truman and Roosevelt, Chief Justice Earl Warren, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and the late John Foster Dulles.

Some senators who objected to its activities have been attacked, and excoriated with speeches on the floor of the Senate. Among them are the conservative Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi and the liberal Senator Kuchel of California, both Republicans.

Senator Dodd (D., Conn.), vice chairman of the Internal Security subcommittee, started the Senate discussion of the society today.

He concentrated on Robert Welch, a retired Massachusetts candy manufacturer who founded the society in 1954 and wrote a tract called "The Politician" in which he made many of his accusations of important Americans.

Dodd, who is a vocal anti-Communist himself, also charged "make it clear that the Communist and ultra-Communist are the only opposition to the American political system."

He said Welch's extreme views are not shared by the great majority of Americans who joined the society because of their genuine concern over communism.

"Cannot Be Dismissed"

"But these views cannot be dismissed out of hand as the individual views of one man. Welch happens to be head of an organization—and he has never repudiated the views in question," Dodd said.

He also criticized the society's attacks on Kuchel and Young, whom he called "staunch anti-Communists."

Kuchel took the floor next to lash out at the society and its founder's writings on former President Eisenhower and Justice Warren.

"Good God!" he shouted.

He said the American people and the American Government "let that kind of spleen be poured on one who gives his whole life to the cause of freedom."

He declared that the Government Operations Committee should call Welch, and make him testify on the basis for his charges. Then, because "he is unable to document them," he should apologize to Mr. Eisenhower, Warren and the public, Kuchel said.

Senator Young stood briefly to endorse the sentiments of Dodd and Kuchel. Three weeks ago, he made a long statement against the society.

At that time, the North Dakotan said Welch's accusations went far beyond anything the late Senator Joe McCarthy ever dreamed of.

Later, reporters asked Dodd if he agreed with Kuchel that an investigation was in order, and whether he might urge such a probe by the Internal Security subcommittee.

He said that he personally would do so, but that he had no power to make such a decision himself.

The Internal Security panel has been answering mailed complaints about the society with a form letter which says it "seems to be, from our records, a patriotic organization."

Dodd said this characterization was written by a committee staff member before many of the facts about the organization had been made public.

Both the Internal Security unit and the House Un-American Activities Committee have concentrated their investigative work against left-wing and Communist-front groups, rather than against organizations at the other end of the political spectrum.

"No Material Information"

Representative Reuss (D., Wis.) stated today that his request for a probe by the Un-American Activities panel had been rejected by Representative Walter (D., Pa.), chairman.

He released a letter in which Walter said, "We have received no material information which indicates that an investigation should, or could, be made by us under existing statute defining the authority of the committee."

"The specific complaint alleges wrongs against individuals—whose

records would be shown in the civil courts," Walter wrote.

Representative Hiestand (R., Cal.) disclosed that he is a John Birch Society member. He defended the group, and asked for an investigation, too—to clear the society's record.

"When an anti-Communist group begins to hurt, it gets smeared," Hiestand said. He added that Welch's charges against the prominent Americans had been made before he founded the society.

He said he believed other congressmen also were members, but would let them make their own statements about it.

After Reuss's request for a probe was turned down by Walter, Reuss said he would take the matter up with other congressmen, including Speaker Rayburn (D., Texas).

"Should Know About"

He said he had no desire to curb the society's right to free speech, but that its charges "are activities that Congress and the public don't know about and should know about."

Many of the letters he and other legislators have received apparently are form letters, "masterminded by someone other than their writers," Reuss stated. Those letters have made such demands as the impeachment of Justice Warren.

A staff member of the Un-American Activities Committee said late today that Walter had asked an outside lawyer to check the laws to be certain he was right in ruling the society's activities outside the panel's jurisdiction.

Killed By Red Chinese

John Birch, for whom the controversial society was named, was a Georgia fundamentalist missionary who became an intelligence agent in China and was killed by the Chinese-Communists.

The society's total membership is said to be somewhat under 100,000, and a life membership to cost \$1,000. Its membership lists are closely guarded.

So conservative a politician as Senator Goldwater (R., Ariz.) said yesterday that he disagreed with many of the ideas of the society.

But, Goldwater said, he is impressed with the type of people in it. "They are the kind of people we need in politics," he stated.

Goldwater said he was not a member.